

Average Unit Size and Minimum Housing Standards Report

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Average Unit Sizes

Introduction

Officers undertook a random sampling of approved residential schemes in the Borough over a 4 year period (between 2008 and 2012). This was undertaken in order to inform viability work being undertaken to develop a Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule. At this time, the average unit sizes in the Borough were estimated to be as follows:

Table 1 - Average unit sizes in Runnymede Borough.

Unit type	Market (sqm)
1 bed	45.5
2 bed	63.97
3 bed	108
4 bed	204.3
5+ bed	263

Officers have now updated this work and have undertaken random sampling of approved residential schemes (1 net unit or more) in the Borough over a 5 year period (between 2012 and 2017). A range of 8-24 permissions were analysed for each year dependent on the size of approved residential schemes from that year (and therefore the range of units sizes in each scheme). It is important to note that whilst undertaking this random sampling there have been some changes in some of the unit types assessed. Differentiation has been made between the sqm in 1 bed houses and 1 bed flats, and between 2 bed houses and 2 bed flats. In addition to this a new unit type has been created which specifically looks at smaller unit types such as annexes/studios and bedsits. Lastly, the unit type of 5+ bed dwellings has been changed to 5 bed dwellings, as it was felt that due to a high proportion of permissions being granted in the Borough for of 6+ bed mansion style homes (with considerable floorspaces), the inclusion of these types of properties would skew the results for the 5+ bed dwelling unit type.

On this basis, the average unit sizes in the Borough are estimated to be as follows:

Table 2 – Average unit sizes in Runnymede Borough.

Unit type	Market (sqm)
Annexe/Studio/Bedsit	30.2
1 bed house	68.7
1 bed flat	60
2 bed house	80.8
2 bed flat	72.1
3 bed	110.3
4 bed	202
5 bed	258.4

Findings

- The additional unit type of Annexe/Studio/Bedsit has an average unit size of 30.2sqm.
- It is observed that since the original analysis carried out in 2012, the average unit size for 1 bed unit types has increased from 45sqm to 60sqm and 68.7sqm.
- Since the original analysis carried out in 2012, the average unit size for 2 bed unit types has increased from 63.97sqm to 72.1sqm and 80.8sqm.
- For both 1 bed flat and 2 bed flat unit types, these have been found to be smaller, by at least 7sqm, than the house unit type equivalents.
- Since the original analysis carried out in 2012, the average unit size for 3 bed unit types has increased from 108sqm to 110.3sqm.
- Since the original analysis carried out in 2012 the average unit size for 4 bed unit types has decreased from 204.3sqm to 202sqm.
- The assessment for 5 bed units has changed since the original analysis in 2012 and so although there has been a decrease in the average unit size of 5 bed unit types this may be due to the sample being more focussed and not including 5+ bed unit types. The average unit size is now 258.4sqm.

Conclusion

The average unit size for 1, 2 and 3 bed unit types has increased whilst the average unit size for 4 and 5 bed unit types has decreased. For Annexe/Studio/Bedsit style properties, an average unit size of 30.2sqm has been found. As the average size of this type of unit has not been analysed by the Council previously, no conclusions can be drawn in terms of whether the unit size is increasing or decreasing. Now that the average unit sizes have been established, further work has been undertaken to investigate whether minimum housing standards should be introduced. This work has been set out below.

Minimum Housing Standards in Runnymede

Introduction

The Planning Policy and Strategy team has utilised the Department for Communities and Local Government's 'Technical Housing Standards- nationally described space standard' document¹ to ascertain whether minimum housing standards are needed as a requirement with the Borough of Runnymede.

The document deals with internal space within new dwellings and is suitable for application across all tenures. The document itself sets out requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area (GIA) of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy as well as floor areas. The standard GIAs set out in the table below contain an allowance for the number of storeys in a building (1, 2 and 3 storey dwellings) to take account of the extra circulation space needed for stairs to upper floors. Individual dwelling types are expressed with reference to the number of bedrooms (denoted as 'b') and the number of bedspaces (or people) that can be accommodated within these bedrooms (denoted as 'p'). This allows for different combinations of single and double/twin bedrooms to be reflected in the minimum GIA. The breakdown of the minimum GIA therefore allows not only for the different combinations of bedroom sizes, but also for varying amounts of additional living, dining, kitchen and storage space; all of which are related to the potential occupancy. Relating internal space to the number of bedspaces is a means of classification for assessment purposes only when designing new homes and seeking planning approval (if the local authority has adopted the space standard in its Local Plan). It does not imply actual occupancy, or require any room in a dwelling to be used for a specific purpose other than in complying with this standard.

Table 1 - Minimum gross internal floor areas and storage (m²)

Number of bedrooms(b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) *			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

As part of the assessment process four different schemes within the Borough of Runnymede which proposed dwellings under use class C3 (dwelling houses) were analysed. The schemes were identified by officers in the Development Management team and were identified as some of the units within the schemes were considered to be of a questionably small scale, when the applications were assessed through the planning application process. The findings are set out in the table and commentary below:

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524531/160519_Nationally_Described_Space_Standard_Final_Web_version.pdf

Type of dwelling	Number of units in scheme	Standard Requirement	Number of units that met the standard requirement	Number of units that did not meet the standard requirement
1b2p, 1 storey dwelling	16 units	50m ²	0 units	16 units
2b2p, 1 storey dwelling	8 units	50-61m ²	2 units	6 units
2b3p, 2 storey dwelling	4 units	70m ²	0 units	4 units
2b4p, 1 storey dwelling	4 units	70m ²	3 units	1 unit
2b4p, 2 storey dwelling	2 units	79m ²	2 units	0 units
3b5p, 1 storey dwelling	1 unit	86m ²	1 unit	0 units
Total	35 units	-	8 units	27 units

Findings

Analysis from the table above can depict that in all the four sampled, development schemes:

- None of the 1b2p, 1 storey dwellings met DCLG's standard requirement of 50m². The smallest floor space for this category was 27.07m² whilst the biggest was 40.9m².
- Within the category for 2b2p, 1 storey dwelling, 2 units out of 8 met the standard requirement with floorspaces of 66.3m² and 73.78m², which were both quite significantly larger than the standard requirement. However, the remaining 6 units did not meet the standard requirement and ranged from 42.3m² to 44.85m². For 2b3p, 2 storey dwellings, a total of 4 units were sampled. None of these units met the standard requirement for this type of dwelling. The floorspaces ranged from 40.47m² to 46.28m². Within the category for 2b4p, 1 storey dwellings, a total of 4 units were sampled. 3 out of the 4 units met the standard requirements, with floorspaces ranging from 73.3m² to 85.14m². However, 1 of the 4 units did not meet the standard requirement as it had a floorspace of 66.41m². For 2b3p, 2 storey dwellings, both of the units sampled did not meet the standard requirement. This was because they had floorspaces of 62.78m² and 52.63m². Lastly, a 3b5p, 1 storey dwelling met the standard requirement with a floorspace of 94.21m². So whilst some of the four development scheme units did meet the DCLG's standard requirement for that type of dwelling, the majority did not, with particularly small floorspaces found in the 1b2p, 1 storey dwelling category. The average floorspace for this type of dwelling was 31m², approximately 18.1m² under the standard requirement.
- Overall out of 35 units approved in the four schemes, only six met or exceeded the requirements of the standards set out in DCLG's document. None of the standard requirements were met for 1 bedroom flats with 2 bedspaces.

Conclusion

It is considered that the findings demonstrate the need to introduce the DCLG space standards in Runnymede to ensure future schemes are designed with sufficient internal space to allow for furniture, activity and movement. Any viability implications should be separately tested as part of the wider consideration of proposed policies and standards in the emerging Local Plan.

Overall report recommendations

When the analysis in this paper is considered in the round, it is considered that the introduction of space standards for studio, 1 and 2 bedroom units can be justified. It is also considered that introducing a minimum space standard for 3 bedroom units can be justified given that the average unit size being delivered for this type of property is close to the space standard recommended by DCLG as a minimum and it would be undesirable to see dwellings reduce in size to below the recommended threshold. In relation to 4+ bedroom units, given that Runnymede is consistently delivering units well in excess of the size recommended in the DCLG Technical Housing Standards document, it is felt that a space standard is therefore not justified for this size of property in the Borough. The size of residential units delivered over the Plan period will continue to be monitored on a regular basis.